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What Will I Do With You

By Charlotte Friedman

You forgot again

what I said minutes ago,

with no apology, just a huff &

willful desire to be and

do as you always have.

I understand. Really, I do.

I'll be like

you someday—a stubborn

do-it-myself, done-no-wrong-

whatsoever woman. No bending

willow-like, no pleasing

without a reason or

with a smile.

I know you suffer. What

will help? Nothing short of

your memory's resurrection.

Whatever I try—phone calls, FaceTime,
doubling up on prayers—the trend is

downhill. Learn to do
without, I say to myself, and ask
what you see out your window. Tell me.
I'll hold the phone, press it to my ear to hear
you say: Looks like someone drew a line across a blank sheet of paper.
Willing this to be an end, fury

will overtake me someday. Never
docile, our tongues whipsaw
your words, but I can't see
with your eyes, so tell me.
I can hear.
What will I do without you?

Charlotte Friedman MFA MS lives in Princeton, New Jersey, with her son and husband. She teaches Introduction to Narrative Medicine in the English Department at Barnard College and gives writing workshops for clinicians and caregivers. Charlotte's work has been published in Reflexions and Light: A Journal of Photography & Poetry.

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